

# A Stroll Through Time

*March 30, 2025 at 2 p.m.*

***Narrator, Morgan MacTavish: I would like to welcome you all to Burns Church Mosa. My name is Morgan MacTavish and I have the honour of welcoming you and introducing our production this afternoon.***

***Welcome to A Stroll through Time – Celebrating 190 years of Burns Presbyterian Church, Mosa. Over the next hour and a half, we want to take you back to some events which occurred in this congregation over our many decades. Although the events did happen, we have taken some liberty with the minor details. Our characters will surround you with their tales of joy and sorrow. Please sit back and relax and we will let our story begin.***

***We open with Aunt Bessie reminiscing with her nieces...***

Young Person: Aunt Bessie, look at what I found! It's an old photo album with some pictures and write ups about our church! Here is an old story...

Aunt Bessie: Oh my, yes! There are many stories my family told me about. There were some really good ones told from the early years of this church; some were humorous and some not so funny at the time. One of the oldest stories from the 1850's tells of a quarrel between two church members over the ownership of some five haystacks. Apparently, the quarrel had gone on for 12 years. The Session of this church made a decision about the ownership of the haystacks, but that didn't seem satisfactory. The argument was so serious that it went to the highest court of the Church, the Synod of Toronto! Imagine travelling all the way to Toronto to argue about haystacks! In the end the Synod in Toronto came to the same decision as Burn's Session. Boy, those early Scots sure could be stubborn!!

Let's hear about how it all got started here at Burns.... The year is 1879 and here comes one of our elderly congregants...

## **The Old Settler Year – 1879 Andrew Johnson**

*A courtly man in his 80's, well-dressed in garb of the 1870's – black suit, white shirt, loose black tie, wide-brimmed hat – with a cane in one hand and a Gaelic Bible in the other.*

Well, good afternoon to you all. Hasn't this been a fine day? I've just been across at the cemetery. I often go there for a stroll on a Sunday. You see, I feel at home surrounded by so many friends and neighbours – most all the folks who came out from the auld country the same time I did so many years ago.

But let me introduce myself. I'm Donald MacBrayne and I was born in the parish of Kilmichael Glassery – that's in Argyll, Scotland – in the year of our Lord 1792. My father, and his father before him, going back generations, worked the same small croft and I expected to spend all my years there. It was a harsh life, scratching a living out of the rocky soil, but it came to be harsher when the lairds decided they could line their pockets with gold raising sheep on the land that we farmed. You

see, we didn't have legal title to our land; the English king handed ownership over to the lairds, some of them sassenachs ('sassenachs' said scornfully – Gaelic word for lowlanders and Englishmen). Oh, they didn't burn us out in Argyll the way they did in Sutherland, but they had their ways of being rid of us. They evicted some crofters; others had their rent raised so high they had no choice but to leave.

My dear wife Effie and I had been married some 12 years and had 5 children, 6 if you count the wee bairn in the churchyard at Kilmartin, when our eviction notice came. We packed up our belongings and went to Glasgow where I found work in the shipyards. Many of our former neighbours were already there; others followed. We had been in the city some years when we started to hear stories about Upper Canada – how a man could get a grant of land that nobody could take away from him. Fifty acres, even a hundred – that seemed unbelievable to us! But, sure enough, letters came from some of our countrymen and they told of their farms in Canada, and their stock, and how much they made on their crops of wheat and oats. Those letters got passed around and discussed. There was no future for us in Scotland and it wasn't too long before some of us decided to try our luck in the new world.

I booked our passage on a sailing ship – the Endeavour – and we set to packing up what we would take with us in a couple wooden crates yea big (*indicates a box about 3' by 2' by 2' high*) that I made. We didn't bring much really – a few clothes other than what we wore, some tools, cooking pots, blankets, and most important of all, our Holy Bible. Effie fattened a hog in the coal bin outside the house we were living in and we butchered it, salted it down and packed it into a barrel along with a sack of oatmeal and some flour and other staples. You see, we had to provide our own food on the voyage – each family took turns cooking their meals in the fireplace on the ship.

All our children came with us save our eldest daughter, Christie. She was married by then to a Glasgow lad who worked in his father's smithy. It pained Effie something fierce to leave Christie, knowing we'd likely not see her again in this life. I have to say, my heart ached as I watched the shoreline of my native country slip below the horizon as we sailed out of Greenock harbour, but I put my trust in Almighty God. He was guiding our footsteps to a promised land.

It took us six weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean and reach Montreal – a terrible trip. We ran into storm after storm and many of the passengers were seasick. Dysentery spread through the ship. Two little ones and an old man died of it and were buried at sea. Whenever the weather permitted, we stayed up on deck to avoid the stench and filth down in the hold where we were crowded together like animals. God be praised, my family all survived. From Montreal, we took a steamer to Kingston and then a schooner to Niagara, through the Welland canal and on to Port Glasgow.

When we landed, I went to see Colonel Thomas Talbot – he was in charge of handing out the land grants. I didn't take to that man myself, but then he seemed to have a prejudice against the Scots, and generally aimed to give us the poorer land. There were some scattered grants open in Aldborough close by the lake but all of us from Argyll wanted to be together so we could have our own church – that's why we ended up here. (*gestures around*)

It was a long walk along narrow trails from Port Glasgow, carrying our belongings on our backs. We'd never seen forests like this at home – some trees so big that 2 men together couldn't circle them with their arms. After two long days, we reached the home of Donald Graham, a mile over yonder. Donald and I had been lads together in Scotland and his family had come out the year before. It was heartening for us to see how they had managed to clear enough land around their cabin to grow some oats. We arrived on the 16th of November in the year of our Lord 1831, and the very next day I went over to walk my land. My land! You can't think what that meant! There were strings attached, you understand. If we didn't clear a certain number of acres every year and maintain a road allowance in front of our property, our land could be forfeited back to the crown.

We stayed with the Grahams in their one-room cabin while we built our own. All the neighbours who had been here a while helped out, just as we did for those who came after us. Then the boys and I set to work cutting down trees so that we would be ready to plant our first crop in the spring around the stumps. It was back-breaking work but our two oldest lads were big enough to do a man's work and I was still strong. Why, that first spring I walked to Wardsville to buy a plough and carried it home on my back. Gradually over the years we made progress, at first burning the tree stumps and then pulling them out with the fine pair of oxen I bought. In a few years we had done well enough to build a new two-story log cabin. Oh, we had our trials – stock losses, crop failures, injuries and sickness. Through it all, our faith comforted us. 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble'.

Our people started gathering for worship as soon as we arrived in this country. When we didn't have a church building, we met in homes or barns. At first travelling ministers would come by just once a month to lead us in services, and it was 1847 before we had a full-time preacher.

The area hereabouts thrived along with our congregation. Now you would hardly know it was the same country we came to so many years ago. There are towns like Glencoe to the south (*pointing*) and Alvinston four miles north, hamlets like Kilmartin here and Walkers over yonder. We have smithies and grist mills and woollen mills. There are railways and fine roads, and schools for the young ones. Our wheat fetched a good price back in the 60's – some say because of the Civil War in the United States – and many of us around here were able to build fine brick houses for our families. Ours was finished in 1874, but my dear Effie didn't live long to enjoy it – stomach problems, it was. She sickened in the winter and was gone before planting time in the spring. I still miss her – she's buried across the road. I don't expect it will be long now before I join her.

Och, now here's a face I don't recognize. Who would you be and where did you come from, lass?

### **THE DUTCH GIRL – Courtney Bailey**

*Young woman dressed in the style of the 1940's, a dress below the knees, dark stockings, blouse, possible bow around neck*

My name is Josina Van Berkel and my parents came from Holland many years after you were laid to rest, Mr. MacBrayne. My father came first, just after the first World War. Holland was crowded and land was scarce. My grandfather had a good farm but it was only big enough to support one family – it would go to my father's eldest brother. Dad heard there was rich land to be had in Canada and so over he came at age 23. The first while he worked as a hired hand for Archibald MacNicoll, next road over (*pointing*), learning English as well as how things were done here – the land and climate were different from what he was used to in Holland.

After a year, he went back home to marry my mother and bring her out to the farm he had bought. The old widow who sold him the property had nowhere else to live, so my parents offered to let her stay on with them – she was like a grandmother to us until she died last year.

Dad started coming to Burns Church when he lived with the MacNicolls. The Presbyterian way was close enough to what he and my mother were used to in Holland, and they felt at home with the Scotch farmers. In time, several other families came from Holland and joined the community and the Burns congregation.

Like all immigrants, my parents missed Holland, but they never regretted their decision to cross the Atlantic to Canada.

Young Person: (Louder) - So here are some more recent stories. I remember hearing about this play. The Young People at the time had a play called "Good Gracious Grandma!" that they presented over the winters of 1953 and 1954. I heard it was a very funny play. One of the main characters dressed up like a grandma. The story was that two girls were afraid to stay overnight at one person's house unless there were women present, so that is why they had to pretend a woman was there. The play was so popular that the Young People traveled all over the place, like Warwick, Florence, Alvinston and Appin presenting it in other churches. They made so much money from the play. I heard they made \$354; and they were able to buy the metal chairs in the church basement. We still use those chairs today.

Aunt Bessie: The Young People did a lot of entertaining. The Hillbillies was a singing group made up of some male members of the choir. They also traveled all over playing instruments like a washboard, harmonica, violin and guitar and they were singers too. They entertained as far a way as Hamilton!

Let's hear something about how music was a part of this congregation through the years.... Look here's Mr. Archibald Munro who has a beautiful singing voice and was the man who led the congregation in song for "close to half a century. It is 1909 and change has come. He's not happy about it but has done his best to accept change with grace....

### **The Last Precentor – John David MacTavish**

*Dressed very formally in a black suit or tuxedo look. He has a coat with a fur collar either on or nearby so he can refer to it..*

Well, well, well. Isn't this a fine group? You look like a good singing group to me.

How do you like my new coat? My services as a Precentor are no longer required and so the congregation has honoured me with this fur-lined coat. A Persian lamb collar. And a cap to match.

I don't mean to sound churlish. But this fur coat represents the final page of a long chapter in Presbyterian History, of Scottish Presbyterian history.

What's a Precentor? For many many years, there was no choir or no organ in the Presbyterian Church, (and certainly no Praise Band.) There was simply the congregation, the Book of Psalms and Paraphrases and... the Precentor. A Precentor is a person who leads the singing or chanting as was the original form.

The first Precentor in this church was Mr. Hugh Leitch, who was followed by my brother, Mr. Colin Munro. My brother had a wonderful range of voice and was a very efficient leader. Rain or shine, he was always present to lead the singing-both in Gaelic and English.

The Precentor stands on his own platform below the Minister's platform. The old log church had a Precentor's platform as did the first brick church that we had to tear down in 1891. My brother led the congregation in lining. You don't "line" any more. Would you like to try it? Ah, it's easy. That is the point.

You know this one, the "Old 100" I will sing the first line and then you sing it with me. And we will go through the first verse that way. Stay seated. Originally, we did not stand to sing. **(This is to the tune of "Praise God From Whom all Blessings Flow")**

*All people that on earth do dwell,*

*Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice*

*Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell*

*Come ye before Him and rejoice.*

See how easy that is? Especially, if you don't read or do not have a copy of the Psalms and Paraphrases. The old Highlander pioneers were not always the best of singers. The Burns congregation was always good, though! Eventually, the congregation learns all the psalms but "lining" is a grand old tradition.

Some time after the first brick church was built, my brother, Colin, was forced to relinquish the position – which he loved so well – due to ill health. The congregation gave him a gold watch.

After Colin resigned as Precentor, I was invited to take the office. I've led the psalms for close to half a century. I live about two miles from the church. Only missed three Sundays on account of illness in the family.

I do like to sing. The psalms and now the hymns. And the Gaelic. I love the Gaelic.

In the 1860s Gaelic worship began to decline in Canada, but not here at Burns. For many years the Gaelic service was the principal service of Burns church, only a very few families remained for the English service. But as time went on a younger generation grew up and the tables were turned – very few assembled for the Gaelic services and a large group turned up for English services. At last, this year, 1909, the question of discontinuing the Gaelic services, especially in winter, arose. The Gaelic members became fewer and fewer and now the services are gone. The "Precentor Age" has passed into history.

Organs started to appearing in Canada in the mid-1800s. The American Presbyterian Church in Montreal acquired an organ in 1831. St. Andrew's in Toronto got its organ about 1851. Organs were condemned by the Free Church Synod in 1855 as they were seen as a threat to Presbyterian purity. In 1862 the Presbyterian Church of Canada debated the organ issue until 1 a.m. before it was decided not to interfere whenever a congregation desired to have an organ. Back then there was more than one denomination of Presbyterian Church though, and the debate went on for years.

Here at Burns the discussion started in the 1880s. There was heated discussion about an organ with the younger congregants wanted to have one. Finally, on behalf of the choir, Mr. Neil McNeil asked permission to use the organ during any evening Sabbath service. The request was granted, and on June 2, 1900, a request from the congregation, through the Moderator, was sent to Session asking for instrumental music at the morning service! After some discussion, the Session unanimously decided to introduce the organ on the first Sabbath of January 1901.

With the organ came the new Book of Praise to replace the old Psalms and Paraphrases. What had been unthinkable a generation earlier was being utilized, albeit with great discretion, in Presbyterian worship services – that is, hymns. The Psalms were still there, but now in a book that was a hymnary. Choirs followed to improve congregational singing. Church architecture started to include choir lofts rather than a Precentor's stand or desk.

Of course, we needed an organist and Miss Sarah Ann MacLachlan was appointed. But not for long. She had to give up the position when she married Joseph Seale in June 1902. There was the first marriage in the church. Prior to that marriages were performed in the old School House at Kilmartin or in people's homes.

So, here I am with my fur coat with a Persian lamb collar, trying to be appreciative. I'm very sad. What is the point of getting an organ if everyone forgets how to sing? God wants to hear the voices of Burns not a "Kist of whistles!" otherwise known as an organ.

Shall we sing the last verse of "Old 100?" I will line the verse and you follow me.

*For why? The Lord God is good,*

*His mercy is for ever sure,*

*His truth at all times firmly stood*

*And shall from age to age endure.*

And so, ends the Age of the Precentor.

Young Person: So, what's with this picture – a bunch of men out beside the church with wheelbarrows and shovels?

Aunt Bessie: Oh, that's us digging the basement in 1953. When the church was built in 1891, they just scooped out enough space below for the 2 furnaces it took to heat the building. When the choir started wearing their special gowns and hats, they made a couple small dressing rooms beside the furnaces, but there was no way to get directly to the sanctuary. Members of the choir had to go up the stairs to the outside and walk around to the entry doors at the front of the church. If the weather was bad, they'd all be wet, cold and wind-blown by the time they got up in the choir loft. Besides, most folks thought it would be nice to have a special area for Sunday School classes and meetings – and the women were keen for a real kitchen. They were tired of serving church suppers in the old sheds out back. Committees were formed and an engineer was hired – he said there would be no problem with digging out a basement under the church and drew up plans as to how it should be done. Not everyone agreed – some folks thought it was a dang-fool idea and the church would collapse into the hole.

Anyway, come March we started in digging by hand – sometimes there would be more than 30 men down there filling up wheelbarrows, then dumping the dirt onto a tractor-powered conveyor belt going up through the window. Cement retaining walls were put in to protect the church foundations and steel I-beams to support the floor above. Do you know, the only labour costs were for the cement contractors who put in the retaining walls and the floor. Tradesmen from the congregations donated their time to do the brickwork, electricity, plumbing and carpentry, and gave us materials free or at cost. The whole basement cost \$4000 in total.

When construction was done, the ladies took over. They did the painting and supplied the kitchen with all the necessities – the hot water heater; gas stove and burners; dishes, glasses and cutlery. They supplied curtains for the stage and windows, and bought a piano. The Young People's group bought a hundred stacking chairs. There was a dedication ceremony in March of 1954, a year after the work started, and afterwards the ladies served a turkey dinner out of their new kitchen.

Young Person: I'd like to know more about all the churches that were once standing here....

Aunt Bessie: This is the day this church was formally opened and dedicated - the third Sabbath of January 1892.

Apparently, the old log church was still standing in 1891, somewhere in the parking lot southeast of the present church...

### **The Four Churches at Kilmartin – Taylor Chalupka**

*Dressed as a young man, suspenders, baggy wool pants to the knees with knee socks going up to the pants at the knee, white blousy shirt, and a cap to cover your pulled up hair (Mary Simpson has a cap)*

Hello everyone. Isn't this church magnificent? I know there are beautiful churches in the city of London and Chatham. But here in our own community.

We laid the cornerstone last September 1, 1891.

In November 1890, the church fathers decided to take down the old church and build a new one. The old men argued about it but everyone could see that the new slate roof was a bad idea. The church walls just could not support the new heavy slate roof. The old brick church was built in 1867 - 34 years ago - it wasn't that old, but it needed a new roof.

This is the fourth church we've had in Kilmartin. We hear these old stories over and over - in the Gallic - I speak Gallic too as well as English.

In 1835, a small log church was built on the other side of the road – there, in the Kilmartin Cemetery – somewhere – I'm not sure where.

The ancestors had fiery tempers and the work stopped when they disagreed about exactly where to build the log church.

The problem was solved. Services were conducted in the building without a roof for one winter. Can you imagine? they said that there were no doors, windows or roof! They sat on sleepers (rough benches) and listened reverently and with deep interest to the message from God's Holy Word, even on the coldest and stormiest days of winter.

So, they gave up on finishing that church and held services in various homes and barns central to the community.

#### **1840s Church #2:**

Next building was "the old log church". It was built in the early 'Forties.' It's a fine example of log building. (Hold up painting) See the logs hewed flat by hand.

I don't think the old log church will ever fall down. It was such a wonderful place for we children to play hide and seek ( if our parents didn't see us) – we were not supposed to "play" in the old log church so we would have our own worship services.

*On to church number three:*

In the early 1860s, the congregation wanted a fancier church and secured five acres for the manse from the late Donald McNichol – (whispered loudly) \$300 dollars! – Mr. McNichol gave an additional acre on condition that the church be built here.

The manse and stable were built in 1864. We call the few acres behind the manse "the Glebe". It's for the minister's use – he and his family can plant a garden, keep a milk cow, a few sheep for wool, a fruit orchard.

Just before I was born, the congregation obtained an acre of land from the late Peter McIntyre, on the Metcalfe side of the road, (*wave across the road*) to build stables for all of our horse teams.

#### **(1867)**

The first brick church was built in 1867. The old log church was too small. This third church had a tall taper-like spire. Look, here is a sketch I made. (*hold up sketch*)

The brick church had one main entrance through a double door.

At the front of the church stood the elevated pulpit with red draperies and a platform for the Precentor. (There was talk about having a choir and an organ but the old folks say that the organ is the devil's instrument)

When the church was only about 20 years old, the roof began to leak. It was decided by the congregation after much debate to have the roof replaced with a new slate roof. Slate is very popular and guaranteed to last many lifetimes if maintained. Expensive, but economical over such a long time. *But* slate is heavy.

Soon after the slate was installed the church showed signs of weakness, cracking in places, and getting out of line. It was embarrassing for those who supported the slate roof idea and those who argued against the slate tried not to be pious. The men attempted to put rods of iron through the building but it was still considered unsafe. Going to church was quite exciting – we were never quite sure whether it might tumble down around our ears during the sermon. Or whether it would be lying in a heap the next Sabbath when we came to church.

Finally, at a congregational meeting held last November, it was decided to demolish the cracking church. A Building Committee immediately hired Mr. Frederick Henry. He is both an engineer AND architect.

Thomas Hopkins and Sons from Glencoe were hired to build the church. This building has a properly supported slate roof and a polygonal core designed to allow more pews close to the pulpit. The polygonal plan had a history among the Scots and it has recently become popular with other protestant congregations in the London region. He designed these broad wings to give the facade an appearance of breadth. Note how the positioning of the doors draws the eye towards the sides of the façade. The row of arched windows near the bottom of this bay cuts across the gable to create strong horizontal lines that make the church appear wider than it is.

This is not the only church being built in the community. There are three churches being built at the main corner in Glencoe. Quite the competition!

Such a hot day it was today. It was very exciting to lay the cornerstone. Thomas Hopkins and company from Glencoe are building the church. The workmen were all here today. They were so proud.

A sealed box was placed behind the cornerstone so that it can be reopened 100 years from now. That would be 1991. Imagine – 100 years. The box contains a historical sketch of our church's history, some coins, and the names of Queen Victoria and other important persons.

The church won't actually be finished until the snow flies. WE hope to have the first service at Christmas.

*Sources:*

**Nancy Z Tausky & Lynne D DiStefano:** *Victorian Architecture in London & Southwestern Ontario.*, University of Toronto Press, 1986.

Burns Presbyterian Church Mosa, 1835 – 1985. History book.

Young Person: What are they doing here? There is scaffolding inside the church.

Aunt Bessie: Oh, these are pictures of the church during the 1947 redecorating. Thomas G Brown Decorators from Toronto had been given the job of decorating. They painted the borders and emblems on the church walls. And, get this- they painted the burning bush behind the choir to replace the one they washed off! Apparently, the previous paint had been muresco, which had to be removed before they could put on the oil-based paint that would last.

In 1971 the church was redecorated again New red carpet replace the coco matting on the aisles and carpet was also laid in the vestibule and at the front of the sanctuary. The floors under the pews were first varnished in 1972.

Here are some pictures of the most recent renovation. There were many hours spent in the planning stage making lots of decisions about colours and costs before the actual work could begin. First, the stained-glass windows were taken out and repaired. Then, there was the job of taking out all the pews, helping to tear out plaster, cleaning up, and moving the piano and the clavinova to keep them out of the worker's way. The 105-year-old plaster was removed and replaced with new plaster. You know, there aren't many people that know how to plaster any more. The church was really fortunate to have Murray Brown do it. And then there was more cleaning. Then there was painting, stenciling designs, picture taking, laying carpers, lowering light fixtures and more cleaning. Finally, the pews were put back, and the choir loft was restructured to allow for more concerts or drama presentations. And finally, more cleaning. Everyone pitched in with the creativity, sweat and patience.

Young Person: And here is a picture of a ball game. What is that all about?

Aunt Bessie: Ball games were played during the 1950s and early 60s games against neighbouring youth groups. But things got a lot bigger and a lot more organized in the early 70s. A Young People's League was organized and games were played during July and August at the Appin Ball Park. During the time the games were being held there were teams from Melbourne United and Presbyterian church, Appin United and Presbyterian churches, Glencoe United, Presbyterian, Anglican and Catholic churches as well as Burns Mosa, Alvinston Presbyterian and Kerwood United churches. There were so many teams that we had to schedule 2 games on 2 nights a week. At the end of the season the Year end tournament was held and a seasonal winner declared. What a lot of fun those games were!

Young Person: And more pictures of young people at a church near a beach.

Aunt Bessie: Oh, these pictures were taken at Sauble Beach. Back in the 70s when Reverend Lennox was here the Young People's Group was very active. Reverend Lennox and his family had a cottage in Sauble Beach. He was involved in starting a Presbyterian Church there called Huron Feathers. Reverend Lennox and his wife, Mary would invite the Young People's group and some of their musical friends to come up to Sauble Beach to run coffee houses and lead the Sunday service. Our music and fellowship were to encourage people to come to the new church. I remember hearing what a good time everyone had. There were stories of pajama fights, and lots of teenage craziness. I don't know how the Lennox family put up with all those people in their cottage!!

Aunt Bessie: Here we are in the year 1927 and Alice McDermid is getting ready for a church supper...

### **A Woman's Point of View – Carol Leitch**

*48-year-old woman in house dress and bib apron standing by a table. She is holding a handful of cutlery that she is polishing with a tea towel and laying in place settings on the table.*

Oh, hello there. I don't believe we've met before. I'm Mrs. Douglas MacDermid, but you can call me Alice. You are a bit early for the supper, but sit down and make yourselves comfortable. I'll just continue on with what I'm doing.

It's sure nice to see new faces here at Burns Church. You know we lost some of our congregation a couple years ago when church union happened. You don't know much about that? Well, I'll tell you – a bunch of bigwigs got together and decided the Methodist and Presbyterian and a few other small churches should join together to make the United Church of Canada. Every congregation got to vote as to whether they would join or not. Our minister was awful keen on the idea, and when our people voted to stay Presbyterian, he hightailed it to the Glencoe United Church, taking some of the congregation and all but 2 of the elders with him. It was a worrisome time – families taking different sides. My father, he said "We've been Presbyterians since we came from Scotland – I'll be a Presbyterian until the day I die!" My sister Dolly, she didn't know which church her husband had decided on until they got to the end of their road that first Sunday and her husband turned the buggy right towards Glencoe instead of left to Burns. Of course it's the husband's place to decide things like that, but me and my Douglas at least talked about it. If he had chosen different, I might not have been baking his favourite elderberry pie for a time. *(she chuckles and pushes back her hair with the back of her hand)*

These suppers are a lot of work – I been up since before dawn, making buns, baking pies, roasting chickens and boiling potatoes for salad. I've sometimes thought it must be nice to be a man and get to just walk in, sit down and have the food put in front of you – though, to give them credit, the men do set up the tables for us ahead of time and some of them even pour the tea. Those big granite pitchers are pretty heavy when they are full. Anyways, I'm not complaining – there's lots of fun and chatter while we women are clearing the tables and washing up the dishes. It can be a lonely life on the farm – a woman can go weeks without seeing another woman, excepting for at Sunday services. My Douglas is a good man, but he's not much of a one for conversation and the boys are no better, although my Duncan seems to have

lots to say when that pretty little Maisie MacTaggart is around. My only daughter, Euphemia – Phemie we called her – died when she was just five years old – Doc Walden said it was her appendix. She'd been complaining about a sore stomach for a few days and she was off her food, but it was early September and the young'uns had been into the green apples. We just thought it was because of that at first. Then suddenly she got really sick – awful pain, her belly bloated and just burning up with fever. Doc Walden come and give her some medicine but she died anyway. Nowadays they have an operation for appendix – Sara Cameron over on the 9th Concession, she had it bad a few months back. A doctor come down special on the train from London. He said she couldn't be moved so he did the operation right there on the kitchen table with her father holding the oil lamp for the doctor to see by. Took the girl a while to come round, but she's in fine shape now. Her parents have a lot to be thankful for. My little Phemie is buried over yonder in the cemetery. A lot of mothers have watered that grass with their tears since our people first come here in the 1830's. My mother-in-law said, "Well, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. At least you and Douglas is young enough to have more little ones." That was true – Robert and Archie come after, and they are precious to me, but I don't suppose a day goes by that I don't think of my Phemie. She'd have been a young woman now, maybe with a husband and kiddies of her own. *(sighs)* I take comfort knowing I'll see her again when the Good Lord calls me home.

In the meantime, there's lots to keep me busy on this earth. My Douglas is a good hard worker, but I still reckon there's some truth to that old saying, "A man may work from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done".

Still, unless the weather is really bad, it doesn't matter how many baskets of plums need canning or socks need darning – I go to the Women's Missionary Society and the Ladies Aid here at Burns faithful every month. The meetings are held together because it's the same ladies that belong to both. We take turns going to each other's homes – I like to have the May meeting as I have some especially fine tulips, and I take the ladies out to see them after the lunch.

The Women's Missionary Society was formed up in 1886 – its purpose is to support our missionaries doing God's work in all kinds of faraway lands – India, China, Trinidad, New Hebrides. The WMS also supports missions in our own Canada – working in the Yukon during the gold rush and amongst the poor immigrants coming from eastern Europe to settle our prairies. One way we at Burns help is by putting together bales – I remember one, in 1898 it was, for famine-stricken children in India. We made quilts and native suits of white cotton trimmed with bands of red. We even put in some dolls and toys. I reckon kiddies are much the same all over the world – they need dolls to cuddle and toys to play with. The WMS also sends money to the General Fund of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Why, the first year, in 1886, they sent \$9.79. That may not seem much by today's standards, but believe you me, that was a lot of money for farm women back then. The missionaries send reports that get read out at the meetings and we learn about the countries where they are working.

Our minister started up the Ladies Aid in 1919 and we just got busy planning projects and raising money. By the end of our first year, we'd raised enough to buy the communion table for the church as well as the linens to go with it. Just 3 years ago, in 1924, we paid \$863 for decorating the church, and we paint and decorate the manse every 5 years. We give money to the board of managers here to help out with expenses, and ladies donate apples and vegetables and canning from their own larders to places like the Tuberculosis Sanitarium in London.

Our Women's Missionary Society and Ladies Aid meetings are really interesting – educational, you know. They give a body something different to think about while you're kneading dough or hanging out the laundry. But I have to say, my favourite part is the social time after, when all us ladies just get to talk amongst ourselves – about our young ones and our gardens and the best way to get a tomato juice stain out of our good tablecloth – nothing very important. But it's companionable, you know. Same as after Sunday services. Used to be before cars started to come along, the womenfolk would stay at the church with the children while the men would go to the sheds across the road to hitch up the horses. Sometimes it seemed to take an awful long time to get those horses hitched and it was rumoured some of the men took the opportunity to light up their clay pipes and have a smoke, but the women didn't mind. It gave them longer to visit. Nowadays, with some folks having automobiles, there isn't the same need to wait around after church, but we do it anyway.

There's only one time I remember that nobody stayed to visit after Sunday services. I was just a girl at the time and we had a minister who was really strict. There was a young woman in our congregation got herself in trouble – had a baby out of wedlock. The minister excommunicated her – reckon you didn't know Presbyterians could be excommunicated but they can and he done it. After a while, he said she could be readmitted to the church, but first she was shamed in front of the whole congregation. This Sunday, she had to wait alone outside the church until an elder came out to fetch her. Then she sat by herself in the front pew and publicly admitted she was in a state of sin. She had to answer such questions from the Shorter Catechism as the minister felt had a bearing on her case. I'll never forget the sound of her sad clear voice or the white faces of her parents as they watched her. Many of the women in the church were in tears and the men just stared at the floor. After, the minister announced he had fulfilled the will of God in abiding by the disciplinary procedures of the Presbyterian church. He put me in mind of a great bird of prey when he raised his arms in his black gown and cried out that there was more joy in heaven over one sinner who repented than over the ninety and nine who were blameless.

We all left the church quietly and went directly home. I never heard anyone speak about that Sunday again, though I did ask my mother once why the baby's father didn't get excommunicated too. Mother didn't say anything for a few minutes and then she said she guessed it was because Eve listened to the serpent in the garden of Eden and caused the fall of man, so women have been punished ever since. It never seemed quite fair to me that all women should have to pay for Eve's wrong-doing. I'll tell you though – there's some scientists are saying now there was no Adam and Eve and that we all came to be here because of something called 'evolution' – though I can't just wrap my head around the idea of us all being descended from monkeys. Still our world is full of changes. Who would have thought 50 years ago that women would have the vote? What will the world be like in another 50 years? Maybe someday women will even be elders in the church – or preachers! Now wouldn't that just be something?!!

Young Person: How things have changed! And here are photos of people working on something It looks like these people are really busy at a fair or amusement park. What is going on here?

Aunt Bessie: Oh wow! Those pictures are from another one of the most ambitious projects this church undertook and it happened during the lifetime of many people who still attend this church. In the 1970's the Board of managers were looking for a good fund-raising project. It was suggested the church have a food booth at the 1973 Plowing Match to be held on Don and Ann McGugan's farm in Brooke Township. The idea was brought to the Annual meeting for a congregational decision. As is typical of this church everyone agreed to pitch in. Keith and Marg Field were the Chairs for the undertaking. Letters were written back and forth with the ploughing match committee and all was set to go. Many trips were made to the site with supplies and helpers. We passed the Health inspections and set up picnic tables for people to sit. Refrigeration equipment was rented, as well as grills to cook the food. The menu was to be ham on a bun with a slice of fresh tomato, doughnuts, muffins, ice cream bars and fruit pies. All was washed down with a cup of perked coffee! It was fortunate to have the flexibility of us farm families to make the food and man the booth. I remember lots of high school students hurrying out of their last class to get to the booth to help. Boy, I remember that familiar, "Ham on a bun. Come and get your ham on a bun!" being shouted out to attract hungry people. Originally, we planned for 65 pies a day, but then we had to up the number to 85 pies per day! Some women, like my wife, were making 8 pies a day! Others were constantly baking muffins. When the week was over, we were all exhausted but the church had made a profit of \$4800!!! What an experience that was!

Well, there are lots of stories we could talk about. One thing for sure things were never dull around Burn's Mosa. Some group was always doing something. That's what kept the people here together for 190 years. Good thing you found this album. It brings back lots of good memories. Wonder what pictures will be gathered over the next 190 years?

Narrator: Thank you all for coming today and we hope you go away with a few stories of the past of this congregation. I want to thank our actors from today.... and a thank you to Marie Williams for gathering and organizing the photos for the preperformance and for the posters. Thank you to the writing team, Louise Campbell, Mary Simpson and Flora Walker and most of all thank you to all of you here today. Your support for this church community helps ensure the church will be here for many years to come!